

# On the migratory status of the Patagonian population of the Striped Woodpecker *Picoides lignarius*

by Juan Mazar Barnett

Received 12 July 2002

The Striped Woodpecker *Picoides lignarius* occurs in Patagonian forests and woodlands at the base of the southern Andes in Chile and Argentina. In Chile it occurs from Coquimbo (c. 29°S) south to Ultima Esperanza, Magallanes (c. 53°S) (Hellmayr 1932, Housse 1945, Johnson 1967, Araya & Millie 1986). In Argentina its latitudinal range is more restricted, from northwest Neuquén (c. 37°S) south to southern Santa Cruz province (c. 53°S) (Short 1982, Winkler *et al.* 1995, de la Peña 1999). It occurs from the lowest valleys and near sea level to 2,000 m (Hellmayr 1932, Short 1982, Fjeldså & Krabbe 1990, Chébez *et al.* 1993). The species has also been cited for Mendoza province, Argentina (Steullet & Deautier 1946), and repeated, e.g. by Pergolani de Costa (1965) and Canevari *et al.* (1991). Earlier mentions for Corrientes and Entre Ríos provinces (Grant 1911) were dismissed by Hellmayr (1932) and Steullet & Deautier (1946). *Picoides lignarius* has historically been cited from Córdoba and La Rioja provinces in central Argentina (where its closest relative, the Checkered Woodpecker *P. mixtus* occurs), and it has been considered a migrant to this region by many authors. These provinces are 800–900 km north of the northern edge of the current known range of *P. lignarius* in Patagonia. A second, allopatric population of *P. lignarius* inhabits dry intermontane valleys of central Bolivia and northwest Argentina (Fjeldså & Krabbe 1990, Mazar Barnett *et al.* 1998). This resident population is best treated as a separate taxonomic unit (Mazar Barnett 2001) and therefore this analysis considers only the southern, Patagonian *P. lignarius*.

During a study of the taxonomy and distribution of the South American *Picoides*, I examined both the literature and museum specimens to elucidate the controversy surrounding the migratory status of Patagonian *P. lignarius* and its occurrence in central Argentina. This, coupled with communications with several colleagues, led me to re-evaluate previous data and reach new conclusions concerning the species' distributional range and movements.

## Historical data

*Picoides lignarius* was originally described from 'Chile', and all subsequent authors have reported it from Patagonian localities in Chile and Argentina. It was first mentioned for Córdoba province by Hargitt (1890), who noted two specimens from Cosquín. All subsequent authors included Córdoba within the species' range without further details. Key Argentine references that did so include Dabbene (1910), Steullet & Deautier (1946), Zotta (1944), Olrog (1959), Pergolani de Costa (1965), Olrog

(1979), Canevari *et al.* (1991), de la Peña (1994), as well as Hellmayr (1932), Peters (1948), Philippi (1974), Short (1982), Winkler *et al.* (1995) and Sibley (1996). All appear to have repeated the original mention by Hargitt (1890). Nores *et al.* (1983) did not include the species in their Córdoba list, but in a footnote stated that 'it is cited for Cosquín by Hargitt (1890) and subsequently by Olrog (1959, 1963, 1979), as a winter visitor', whereas later Nores (1996) went further to include it in a list of only 'doubtful' species, citing Hargitt (1890).

Koslowsky (1895) was the first to mention it for La Rioja province. He stated that in Chilecito 'only one individual was seen and hunted in a farm; it is a female'. Again, all of the above authors cited the species for La Rioja in obvious reference to Koslowsky's (1895) report (e.g. Steullet & Deautier 1946). Fontana (1908) was the only author to question the presence of *P. lignarius* in La Rioja, while Cory (1919) and Hellmayr (1932) appeared to overlook this. Olrog (1963) did not mention either Córdoba or La Rioja provinces within the species' range, in spite of the footnote in Nores *et al.* (1983).

Since Olrog (1959) first noted the species as a migrant to these provinces, most of the above authors (who seemed to repeat the Córdoba and La Rioja data of Hargitt [1890] and Koslowsky [1895], respectively), also appear to have repeated Olrog's (1959) statement thereafter. Thus, the current mainstream literature states that *P. lignarius* is a partial austral migrant during the winter (e.g. Olrog 1979, Meyer de Schauensee 1982, Short 1982, Fjeldså & Krabbe 1990, Canevari *et al.* 1991, Chesser 1994, de la Peña 1994, Winkler *et al.* 1995, Parker *et al.* 1996, Sibley 1996, de la Peña & Rumboll 1998), although others have made no mention of this (e.g. Olrog 1963, 1968, 1984, Narosky & Yzurieta 1987, de la Peña 1999). Only Chébez *et al.* (1993) suggested this statement requires confirmation.

## Evidence from the literature and local ornithologists

It is clear that the general belief that Patagonian *P. lignarius* is migratory stems from the repetition of earlier references in general works. However, perusal of a suite of local, regional or more specific literature suggests otherwise. Indeed, Short (1982) regarded only the Argentine population to be migratory. Wetmore (1926) reported three early June 1912 specimens from the upper río Las Bayas, Río Negro, Argentina, and Kuroda (1933) mentioned a pair collected at S. Boronol Perquenco, Cautín, Chile, in July 1931, with two late May specimens coming from Barrancas, central Chubut, Argentina (Camperi 1998). Philippi (1937) regarded it as resident at Aconcagua, Chile. Housse (1945) mentioned only altitudinal movements for the species in Chile, stating that 'only in winter it reaches the cultivated lowlands', while Johnson (1967) regarded it as a 'resident nesting species throughout its range' in Chile. Christie (1984) catalogued it as a permanent resident at Nahuel Huapi National Park, Río Negro, Argentina, and Ippi (2001) considered it resident in the Challhuaco Valley, in the same general region.

From its southernmost range, reports also seem to contradict the view that the species is migratory. Venegas (1986) regarded it as a resident at Magallanes,

performing only 'local migrations', although subsequently Venegas & Sielfeld (1998) regarded it as resident there, and made no reference to local movements. Couve & Vidal Ojeda (1999) mentioned such movements, stating that the species is a 'resident, breeder, although part of the population undertakes short migratory movements to more temperate sections during the winter' at Torres del Paine National Park, Magallanes, Chile, where Garay & Guineo (1993) noted it as 'annual'. The extent and scale of such movements is intangible from the literature cited. It is worth recording that Olrog (1948) mentioned the acquisition of six specimens on several dates in June 1941 at Hotel Río Rubens, Magallanes, Chile. However, the published dates are incorrect as to month, as these specimens (deposited at the Swedish Museum of Natural History) were actually taken in January (G. Frisk *in litt.* 2002).

These data are complemented by recent observations by local ornithologists throughout the species' range. It has been considered to be equally abundant year-round in the Nahuel Huapi area, with family groups remaining throughout the winter (V. Ojeda *in litt.* 2002). It is also a permanent resident at Lago Puelo National Park, Chubut, Argentina, where it performs only altitudinal movements (F. Vidoz *in litt.* 2000). It was recorded in July during two consecutive years from near San Martín de los Andes, Neuquén, Argentina (G. Dupuy *in litt.* 2000, 2002). In Magallanes, E. Couve (*in litt.* 2002) confirms it is a year-round resident in the general area, performing only local movements, mainly altitudinally.

### Evidence from museum specimens

What of the specimens from which all the apparent confusion arose? I was able to locate the Córdoba specimens cited by Hargitt (1890), housed at the Natural History Museum, Tring (NHM), and these held key details on their labels. Specimen 89.2.26.112 was originally labelled as '*Chloronerpes maculatus* ♂' (a junior synonym of *P. mixtus*), and was collected at Cosquín, on 8 August 1882, by E. W. White. The NHM tag stated '*Picus mixtus*', and it was annotated '*Dendrocopus lignarius* (Mol.) ♂ imm' on the back, perhaps by E. Hargitt himself, probably by 1889 when it was accessioned, or 1890 when Hargitt's catalogue was published. These labels contained annotations by Lester L. Short as follows. On the original tag he noted: 'Seems ad. Its measurements, for a ♂ place it in the range of overlap, as do certain other characters. Should be compared with more *D. m. berlepschi*, *lignarius* x *mixtus*? LLS '66'. On the museum label, where '♂ imm.' is noted, it is clear that Short believed it to be an adult, by adding 'no' (pointing to the 'imm'), and '= ad.', as well as his initials and date, again. Having examined about 350 *Picoides* in American and European museums, I find this specimen unlike *P. lignarius*, and with characters of the Chaco populations of *P. mixtus*, such as the body measurements, and the pattern of dorsal and ventral markings. Specimen 89.2.26.113 was originally labelled as '*Chloronerpes maculatus* ♀', and was also collected at Cosquín, on 15 August 1882, by E. W. White. The NHM tag was again annotated, '*Dendrocopus lignarius* (Mol.) ♀ ad'. Short noted on the original label: 'By conventional knowledge this has to be *mixtus* LLS '66'. I also consider this specimen another clear example of *P. mixtus*.

The female collected by Koslowsky (1895) at Chilecito, La Rioja, was examined by Steullet & Deautier (1946) but it appears to have gone missing since, as it could not be located at Museo de La Plata, nor could I find any details of it in the accessions catalogue.

Besides the specimens mentioned above, I could only find a few Córdoba or La Rioja specimens in museum collections. All were clearly *P. mixtus*. It is noteworthy that a specimen from Samay Huasi, near Chilecito (where Koslowsky's [1895] supposed *P. lignarius* came from), agrees well with the characters of *P. mixtus* in that region (see Camperi & Darrieu 2001), and so do the *Picoides* populations in Mendoza (see Reed 1916, Contreras 1980).

## Conclusions

The reports of *P. lignarius* for Córdoba and La Rioja provinces in most recent literature all refer to repetition of the original references for these provinces. The view that it migrates to these areas in winter stems from an *assumption*, without presenting additional information, and the perpetration of this mistake. Study of specimens upon which the presence of *P. lignarius* in these provinces was based reveals that those from Córdoba (originally labelled as *P. mixtus*) were subsequently misidentified, as was likely the case with the one from La Rioja, now lost. The available study skins and literature from these regions demonstrate that only *P. mixtus* occurs there. Furthermore, there are no recent mentions of *P. lignarius* north of Neuquén province, outside the Patagonian forest, in Argentina. The review of specific literature, coupled with comments from current local ornithologists show that *P. lignarius* is resident throughout its range, and it is likely that it only performs regional movements, possibly in response to particularly harsh winter conditions.

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Enrique Couve, Graciela Dupuy, Valeria Ojeda, Ana Trejo and Félix Vidoz for availing me of their records. Mark Adams, Robert Prys-Jones and Michael Walters provided helpful assistance at the Natural History Museum, Tring, as did Anfbal Camperi, Carlos Darrieu and Abel Zapata at Museo de La Plata. Göran Frisk provided critical data from the catalogue of the Swedish Museum of Natural History. I am also grateful for the assistance provided by Paul Sweet at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), New York, Jorge Navas at Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales, Buenos Aires and Leo Joseph at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, Philadelphia. My visit to AMNH was made possible through a Collection Study Grant. Chris Feare, Guy Kirwan, Mark Pearman and Lester L. Short made useful comments that improved the manuscript. Santiago Imberti provided references.

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## Bertram Lutley Sclater and Bertram’s Weaver *Ploceus bertrandi*

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Received 22 August 2002

Shelley (1893: 23–24) named a new weaver from Nyasaland (now Malawi) *Hyphantornis bertrandi* after “Bertram Lutley Sclater”. The following year he named a race of bush-shrike after him, *Laniarius bertrandi* (Shelley 1894: 15), now *Malaconotus olivaceus bertrandi*, again with the same spelling in each case. Sclater’s brother William Lutley Sclater (1930) used the English name “Bertram’s Weaver”.

Until recently all authors of regional avifaunas have assumed that this was no error by Shelley, and that he did intend to latinize the name Bertram as Bertrandus, in what is currently known as *Ploceus bertrandi* (e.g. Benson *et al.* 1971, Mackworth-